

The Third Man: a Comedy in One Act: by Roderich Benedix: Translated by Barrett H. Clark

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BARRETT H. CLARK

GENERAL EDITOR

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RODERICH BENEDIX.

Roderich Benedix (1811-1873) was one of the most popular and prolific of nineteenth century German dramatists. Benedix is ingenious, comic, witty, and his best plays—"Der Prozess," "Die Hochzeitsreise," "Der Dritte," and "Eigensinn"—are based upon the eternally human foibles and eccentricities which never change. "It is the particular merit of Benedix's plays" says the editor of "Der Prozess" (Henry Holt & Company edition), "that they are thoroughly German; the social conditions in the Germany of Benedix's time are, of course, not in all respects those of to-day. The characters are familiar types in the upper middle class, and they reveal their foibles, their eccentricities, their homely virtues in such a way that one has merely to know something of human nature, in whatever land, in order to understand them. There is exaggeration, to be sure, even to the point of caricature, but we are merely amused, never deceived."

The present play presents no difficulties as to staging or acting.

The version here used is based upon the text of the Henry Holt annotated edition.

THE THIRD MAN.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

HAUSMANN.....*A man of leisure*
APOLLONIA.....*His wife*
ADELHEID.....*Their daughter*
KLOTILDE.....*Their niece and ward*

SCENE:—*A room in HAUSMANN'S home, in a small
German town.*

TIME:—*Mid-nineteenth century.*

THE THIRD MAN

SCENE:—*A room in HAUSMANN'S home. There are doors center, left, and right. As the curtain rises ADELHEID is discovered reading a letter.*

ADELHEID. (*Reading*) "Never before in my life could I understand what the poets meant by the joy of seeing once more the object of one's affections—now I do. How often during the past year have I counted the months, the weeks, then the days and hours until I should be able to come and look into your eyes and take your hand and say: 'my dear, dear girl'!" (*She kisses the letter*) Dearest! (*Continuing*) "Only one more day until I am to lay eyes on you. Has all the time we were separated been utterly lost? No, indeed. This separation has taught me how much you have meant to me." (*She quickly hides the letter in her waist as her father, HAUSMANN, enters*)

HAUSMANN. Can you guess whom I have just been with, Adelheid? What's the matter, eh? You seem scared?

ADELHEID. Nothing—only you surprised me! You came in so suddenly.

HAUSMANN. What were you hiding?

ADELHEID. Nothing at all, Father dear.

HAUSMANN. Young girls should not keep secrets from their parents.

ADELHEID. Father dear——!

HAUSMANN. Very well, then, if you say it was

nothing. I have some important news for you—can you guess what?

ADELHEID. I have no idea.

HAUSMANN. (*Good-humoredly*) You're going to marry!

ADELHEID. (*Terrified*) What!

HAUSMANN. See her blush! Ha, ha, ha! That's the way with young girls. I've been looking forward to this moment for a long time.

ADELHEID. But, Father dear, you don't understand!

HAUSMANN. Oh, yes I do! See, just see how surprised you are! They're always that way. Now, listen to me: Herr Hellmuth, an old business friend of mine, has often spoken to me about you—he's even been to see me and made a formal demand for you. You're twenty years old, and it's time you married. Hellmuth is a fine man, at the best time of his life, and I've given him my word—now you're engaged.

ADELHEID. But you wouldn't think of——?

HAUSMANN. But I tell you it's all arranged. I'll go now, and leave you to your own thoughts. By the way, where is your mother? I want to tell her the news. She must be somewhere in the house? (*He goes out at the back*)

ADELHEID. What a blow! Oh, dear.

(*Enter APOLLONIA. She is an amiable yet somewhat phlegmatic person. She carries a letter in her hand.*)

APOLLONIA. Here you are, Adelheid. I was just going to call you.

ADELHEID. What is it, Mother?

APOLLONIA. I have some news for you.

ADELHEID. What?

APOLLONIA. Good news.

ADELHEID. I'm very curious.

APOLLONIA. You'd never guess, so I shan't keep it from you any longer: you're soon to be married.

ADELHEID. Mother!

APOLLONIA. Blushing? Eyes on the ground? My living image when my parents told me. Now let's talk business, dear. I'm so glad at last to see you married off. Here is a letter from my old friend Frau von Heiberg, from Dantzig, who wants her son to marry you. We'd always wanted to see our children united, and now my dearest wish is about to be fulfilled. Young Heiberg is an assessor, he has a splendid position, and can marry well. Of course, I'll have a lot of work to do in getting your trousseau ready for you, but what won't a mother do for her children? Oh, don't answer anything just now, I want to tell your father. Where can he be? He isn't in his room, so he must be in the garden. (*She goes out*)

ADELHEID. (*In despair*) This is the last straw.

(*Enter KLOTILDE.*)

KLOTILDE. You must be an actress, the way you said that!

ADELHEID. Oh, Klotilde!?

KLOTILDE. Yes?

ADELHEID. Oh, I'm so unhappy!

KLOTILDE. Tell me, what's the matter, dear?

ADELHEID. You might just as well know: Father wants me to marry his old friend Hellmuth.

KLOTILDE. Indeed?

ADELHEID. And Mother insists on my marrying Assessor Heiberg.

KLOTILDE. And that makes you unhappy? Think of that! Any other girl would be delighted to get married—the way I was when I had dear Bruno, and now here you are, you can choose between two!

ADELHEID. Oh, that's——

KLOTILDE. Which is as much as to say, you don't want either of them?

ADELHEID. How could you think that?

KLOTILDE. A girl is unhappy under these circumstances when she's in love. You're sad now, therefore you're in love; you don't care for either of the two, therefore there's a third man in the case.

ADELHEID. You're happy, and this doesn't make any difference to you.

KLOTILDE. But I've been married only six months. Who knows what may happen?

ADELHEID. I know what *has* happened to me. My life and happiness are ruined.

KLOTILDE. Ooh, how tragic! But don't lose hope, perhaps we can find your lost happiness again?

ADELHEID. Yes, I do love a third man.

KLOTILDE. I see. I always suspected that your heart was not entirely free, but you played your part so well that I had some doubt.

ADELHEID. I had to keep it a secret.

KLOTILDE. Even from me, your best friend?

ADELHEID. Forgive me, but I agreed with Karl to keep it dark.

KLOTILDE. So his name is Karl——?

ADELHEID. Karl Wildeck——

KLOTILDE. Wildeck? Wasn't he the architect of the railway station here two years ago?

ADELHEID. Yes.

KLOTILDE. Who used to play the piano so well?

ADELHEID. Yes.

KLOTILDE. I compliment you. He's a splendid man, and so nice and amiable. If I weren't so much in love with my husband, who knows whether I might not be attracted to *him*?

ADELHEID. We've been in love for a long time, but Karl wasn't in a position to marry then, and he was much too honorable to live on what I should get as a dowry. So we were engaged, and he went away to get a start. Now he writes me that he is

coming to-morrow morning and is going to marry me.

KLOTILDE. And he remained true for two years? My dear, you ought to exhibit him and charge admission.

ADELHEID. Yes, he's coming to-morrow, and now to-day see what my parents have planned for me.

KLOTILDE. What are you going to do?

ADELHEID. The only thing I can do: tell them and beg them——

KLOTILDE. Madness!

ADELHEID. Shouldn't I do that?

KLOTILDE. Madness!

ADELHEID. Should I elope?

KLOTILDE. Madness!

ADELHEID. Then what shall I do?

KLOTILDE. Use a little brains. Your father wants you to marry Herr Hellmuth, and your mother wants you to marry Herr Heiberg. I know them both, and I tell you neither of them will give in.

ADELHEID. But what I shall do?

KLOTILDE. Let's come into this room and think it over well. A little intelligence and foresight will do wonders. (*She takes ADELHEID by the arm, and as she goes*) When father and mother struggle for the heart of their daughter, they are bound to lose, if the daughter knows something about war. (*They go out left*)

(*Enter HAUSMANN, center, and APOLLONIA, right.*)

HAUSMANN. I've been looking for you everywhere in the house.

APOLLONIA. And I've been looking for you everywhere outside.

HAUSMANN. Well, have you heard the news? Adelheid is engaged. I wanted to tell you.

APOLLONIA. She must have told you, then?

HAUSMANN. What? Do you know? Did she tell you?

APOLLONIA. But how do you know? That I can't understand.

HAUSMANN. My dearest, I don't understand you. Hellmuth left only a quarter of an hour ago.

APOLLONIA. What has Hellmuth to do with the case?

HAUSMANN. He's engaged to Adelheid.

APOLLONIA. Who?

HAUSMANN. Hellmuth!

APOLLONIA. What?

HAUSMANN. Her fiancé.

APOLLONIA. Whose?

HAUSMANN. Adelheid's.

APOLLONIA. There's some misunderstanding. I'm talking about Assessor Heiberg.

HAUSMANN. What's that?

APOLLONIA. He's the one.

HAUSMANN. What?

APOLLONIA. The fiancé.

HAUSMANN. Whose?

APOLLONIA. Adelheid's.

HAUSMANN. Where did you get that idea?

APOLLONIA. Here is the letter from his mother, who makes a formal demand for Adelheid. You know, we've always wanted the children to marry.

HAUSMANN. Now I see! So you've done this behind my back? I'm very sorry for you.

APOLLONIA. Why?

HAUSMANN. If you'd only told me sooner——

APOLLONIA. I don't see——?

HAUSMANN. I tell you, Herr Hellmuth was just here and asked for Adelheid's hand—I said, Yes.

APOLLONIA. Impossible!

HAUSMANN. So you see, you're too late.

APOLLONIA. You are!

HAUSMANN. How is that?

APOLLONIA. Frau von Heiberg has my word of honor, which I intend to keep.

HAUSMANN. What!

APOLLONIA. Adelheid is going to marry Assessor Heiberg.

HAUSMANN. This is ridiculous. Do you mean to say that you are going to set yourself up against me? Nonsense! Herr Hellmuth has my pledged word, and Adelheid is going to marry him.

APOLLONIA. Do you think I'll ever consent to that? You never even consulted me!

HAUSMANN. I can say the same to you. So you are going to marry the girl to him?

APOLLONIA. I am her mother!

HAUSMANN. I am her father!

APOLLONIA. That's the mother's business.

HAUSMANN. That has nothing to do with house-keeping.

APOLLONIA. Who knows better than a mother what is best for her daughter?

HAUSMANN. A man understands these things better than a woman. They have no logic.

APOLLONIA. But you have no judgment.

HAUSMANN. How is that?

APOLLONIA. You want your daughter to marry Herr Hellmuth.

HAUSMANN. Have you anything against him?

APOLLONIA. Anything? Everything!

HAUSMANN. Oho!

APOLLONIA. He's over forty.

HAUSMANN. Best age for a man to marry.

APOLLONIA. Yes—but not a young girl. Then Hellmuth is stingy.

HAUSMANN. Thrift is a virtue.

APOLLONIA. He's not cultured.

HAUSMANN. He's an honest merchant.

APOLLONIA. I don't like it anyway. These tradesmen are such Philistines. They have no feel-

ing for art, and ideals, and the higher things in life. He would never do for Adelheid.

HAUSMANN. There you are always running down the business men!

APOLLONIA. Well, a young woman ought to think something about her mind and her soul.

HAUSMANN. In that case she ought to go to a teacher, and not marry one!

APOLLONIA. How material you are!

HAUSMANN. Tell me, what has Herr Assessor Heiberg to give his wife?

APOLLONIA. Well, if he has no salary, surely we can help him?

HAUSMANN. That's ridiculous! Have I worked all my life only to support a son-in-law? No, I prefer a good, honest, well-established business man. Then Adelheid will at least be sure of her bread and butter.

APOLLONIA. And die of boredom!

HAUSMANN. I've given my word and I don't intend to retract.

APOLLONIA. Neither will I.

HAUSMANN. You must.

APOLLONIA. I won't.

HAUSMANN. I'll find a way of forcing you.

APOLLONIA. How?

HAUSMANN. Hellmuth is going to marry her.

APOLLONIA. No, the Assessor!

HAUSMANN. I say, no——

APOLLONIA. And I say, yes!

HAUSMANN. I won't argue any longer. I'm going to cool off. (*He strides back and forth*) Mark my words: you are not going to have your way, and if I—if I——

APOLLONIA. What?

HAUSMANN. I don't know exactly what, but something's going to happen. You're driving me to distraction meantime. When I die, too, I'll put it in

my will that you're *not* to have your way! (*He goes out, left*)

APOLLONIA. There's a husband for you!

(*Enter KLOTILDE.*)

KLOTILDE. Hello, Auntie! How is everything?

APOLLONIA. The way it always is in marriage. You'll soon have had plenty of experience.

KLOTILDE. Oh, Auntie, Bruno is always lovely to me.

APOLLONIA. You've been married only six months. Just wait, you'll soon see!

KLOTILDE. I don't believe it. But, tell me, what's the matter now?

APOLLONIA. You know I'm a sensible woman; now, don't you think I should stick to an idea when I'm positive I'm in the right?

KLOTILDE. Are you always in the right, Auntie?

APOLLONIA. Naturally. Or rather I must always make my husband think so. Give a man an inch and he'll take a mile.

KLOTILDE. I'll remember that, Auntie. I hope I'll never quarrel with my husband, but if I do, I'll keep your advice in mind. Now will you tell me what the trouble is between you and Uncle?

APOLLONIA. Adelheid is engaged.

KLOTILDE. Really?

APOLLONIA. To Assessor Heiberg.

KLOTILDE. You're joking!

APOLLONIA. No, I'm not. But my husband insists on having her marry that tradesman, Hellmuth.

KLOTILDE. I see, and you don't agree with him? And does Adelheid want to marry either of them?

APOLLONIA. Why, I——

KLOTILDE. What if she is in love with someone else?

APOLLONIA. That's out of the question. She doesn't know any young man.

KLOTILDE. Hm!

APOLLONIA. Do you doubt my word?

KLOTILDE. I don't know whether it's right of me to gossip, only I have an idea that Adelheid is in love with young Wildeck and hopes to marry him.

APOLLONIA. Wildeck? The architect?

KLOTILDE. Yes.

APOLLONIA. So she's done this behind my back, has she? I'll fix her. I tell you, if I have to hold out against my husband and my daughter, I *will* have my way! Where is she now? Think of her falling in love behind my back!

KLOTILDE. But, Auntie, didn't you do the same thing yourself?

APOLLONIA. Haven't I been well punished for it? (*Enter ADELHEID*) At last! When I told you I wanted you to marry Assessor Heiberg just now you didn't answer.

ADELHEID. But what can I say? Isn't it my duty to marry the man my parents have picked out for me?

APOLLONIA. (*To KLOTILDE*) See? (*To ADELHEID*) Have you anything else to say?

ADELHEID. What should I say?

APOLLONIA. (*To KLOTILDE*) What did I tell you!—Klotilde says you are in love already?

ADELHEID. That was wrong of her, but since she's spoken, I will say that I am fond of Herr Wildeck. But if you have other plans for me, I must forget what *I* want.

APOLLONIA. I see! You're a good obedient child. I'm sure you'll be happy with Herr Heiberg. Please be good enough to send the gardener to my room; I want to see him. I'm going to write to Frau von Heiberg.—Good little girl! (*She goes out*)

ADELHEID. But, mother!

KLOTILDE. No, stay here!

ADELHEID. But she's going to write! That will spoil everything. I must tell the whole truth.

KLOTILDE. That *would* spoil it all.

ADELHEID. She'll let me marry Karl.

KLOTILDE. She might under ordinary circumstances. Now she wants her way against your father; *you* have nothing to do with it.

ADELHEID. I don't know what to think. But you advised me to tell mother I was in love—you yourself told her, too.

KLOTILDE. She must know it, but she mustn't hear more about the matter from you. I told her that I only suspected.

ADELHEID. I don't understand your plan.

KLOTILDE. Leave it all in my hands and do exactly as I tell you. Now go and send the gardener to your mother.

ADELHEID. All right, but I think you'll only make matters worse. (*She goes out*)

KLOTILDE. Poor child. (*She knocks on the door to the left*)

HAUSMANN. (*Outside*) Who's there?

KLOTILDE. It's I, Uncle. I'd like to have a word with you.

HAUSMANN. (*Outside*) I'll be with you in a moment. (*He enters. Gruffly*) Well, what is it, Klotilde?

KLOTILDE. What a bad humor you're in!

HAUSMANN. I'm very much worried.

KLOTILDE. (*Giving him a paper*) This document must be signed by you, as my guardian.

HAUSMANN. Give it to me! (*He takes the paper, sits down, and writes*)

KLOTILDE. What has made you so bearish, uncle?

HAUSMANN. My wife—who else could it be? Who else is it ever? My wife! I tell you she's not going to have her way this time.

KLOTILDE. Hm!

HAUSMANN. What do you mean with your "Hm?"

KLOTILDE. My dear uncle, that means that I am rather doubtful!

HAUSMANN. Doubtful, eh? About what?

KLOTILDE. Don't I know my dear Auntie? And don't I know what a strong will she has?

HAUSMANN. This time she'll not have her way! You mark my words.

KLOTILDE. Might I ask what the trouble is?

HAUSMANN. It's about Adelheid's marrying.

KLOTILDE. Indeed?

HAUSMANN. I've given Herr Hellmuth my word that he shall marry her.

KLOTILDE. Hm!

HAUSMANN. My wife wants her to marry Herr Heiberg.

KLOTILDE. Hm!

HAUSMANN. But I will be master in my own house, and I say No!

KLOTILDE. Hm!

HAUSMANN. There you are again with your "Hm!"

KLOTILDE. Still indicative of doubt.

HAUSMANN. Do you doubt that I'll stand my ground and have my way?

KLOTILDE. If Auntie alone stood against you, I am sure you would win, but Adelheid won't mind you, either.

HAUSMANN. What? Is she on her mother's side? I'll bring them both to terms.

KLOTILDE. You can't bring a heart to terms.

HAUSMANN. Is Adelheid in love?

KLOTILDE. With Wildeck the architect.

HAUSMANN. Send her to me at once!—(*He goes to the door, right, and calls*) Friedrich! Tell my daughter to come here at once! (*He returns quickly to KLOTILDE*) How do you know it?

KLOTILDE. How can you ask that? You men are blind, but a woman always sees. We have a sixth sense—and we can tell when someone's in love.

HAUSMANN. You may be right! You're a clever little imp!

KLOTILDE. "Clever little imp?" Oh, uncle—and my husband calls me a "dear angel!" It sounds much better.

HAUSMANN. You're all imps, you women.

(*Enter* ADELHEID.)

ADELHEID. What is it, Father dear?

HAUSMANN. I've been hearing fine things about you. You've been carrying on a secret love-affair behind my back!

ADELHEID. But, father——

HAUSMANN. Do you intend to set yourself against my authority?

ADELHEID. How could you think that?

HAUSMANN. Klotilde has just told me all about it. I wish you to marry Herr Hellmuth. Tell me, what is your answer? Are you going to disobey me?

ADELHEID. No.

HAUSMANN. No?

ADELHEID. No.

HAUSMANN. Then you don't love Herr Wildeck?

ADELHEID. Oh, yes I do, and should rather marry him than anyone else, *with* your permission—otherwise I couldn't think of doing anything against your will.

HAUSMANN. (*To* KLOTILDE) Well, what do you think of that, eh?

KLOTILDE. Because you're a tyrant. I know if I were she, I shouldn't think of giving in obediently.

HAUSMANN. I can well believe that; I'm delighted that you are only my niece—My Adelheid is a good and obedient child. Now for a little talk with my wife, and everything——

(Enter APOLLONIA.)

APOLLONIA. Who's been shouting so? What's the matter?

HAUSMANN. Nothing, only now that you've come, something will be before long.

APOLLONIA. Now, that sounds as if I were sharp-tempered! As a matter of fact, I have great patience and forbearance.

HAUSMANN. Which you proved to me only to-day by trying to set your will against mine.

APOLLONIA. But please allow me observe that you are not the only one who has the right to a will in this house! I too have my rights!

HAUSMANN. Not in a matter of this sort! This is the father's affair——

APOLLONIA. But I have the first right; and furthermore, it's the mother's place to decide——

HAUSMANN. The father's!

APOLLONIA. The mother's!

HAUSMANN. You shan't have your way.

APOLLONIA. You shan't either, I promise you that.

KLOTILDE. It's a shame!

HAUSMANN. What's a shame?

KLOTILDE. That I already have a husband; if I hadn't, I could take one of the two and Adelheid the other. That would decide the matter.

HAUSMANN. There's nothing to decide—I've already made up my mind.

APOLLONIA. We'll see about that. Adelheid, are you going to disobey me?—

ADELHEID. No, Mother dear.

HAUSMANN. Adelheid, you wouldn't disobey me, would you?

ADELHEID. You know, Father dear, I wouldn't.

HAUSMANN. Then she is going to obey me.

APOLLONIA. No, me!

KLOTILDE. The only thing for the poor girl to do

is to marry both of them.—But if you will listen to me, I'll tell you a way out of your difficulty.

HAUSMANN. What is it?

KLOTILDE. If Adelheid takes one of them she will disobey her father; if she takes the other she will disobey her mother; now I suggest she take neither one.

HAUSMANN. What!

APOLLONIA. What!

KLOTILDE. Adelheid, would you disobey your father?

ADELHEID. Never!

KLOTILDE. Would you disobey your mother?

ADELHEID. I shouldn't think of it!

KLOTILDE. You see? There's no other way!

APOLLONIA. But I insist——

HAUSMANN. You may insist, but I'm going to have my way. Otherwise, I'd prefer you to remain an old maid.

APOLLONIA. Rather than have her marry Herr Hellmuth, I'd have you marry the third man.

KLOTILDE. That's the only possible solution.

ADELHEID. Choose: will you marry him or remain an old maid?

APOLLONIA. You like Herr Wildeck, don't you?

ADELHEID. I'll marry him, mother, if you tell me to.

APOLLONIA. Anything to keep your father from having his way!

ADELHEID. Have I your permission, Father?

HAUSMANN. Anything to keep your mother from having her way!

KLOTILDE. Thank Heaven! Now marry Wildeck!

ADELHEID. Father?

HAUSMANN. Yes.

ADELHEID. Mother?

APOLLONIA. Yes.

KLOTILDE. There! Now Uncle, give Auntie your hand. (*She brings them together*)

HAUSMANN. (*Taking his wife's hand*) All right, old lady!

APOLLONIA. (*Laughing*) Well, you didn't have your way!

HAUSMANN. You didn't have yours, either!

KLOTILDE. But *we* had ours.

HAUSMANN. What!

APOLLONIA. What!

KLOTILDE. Sh! We've have enough disputes for one day! (*She puts her arm around ADELHEID'S waist*)

CURTAIN.

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BARRETT H. CLARK

General Editor



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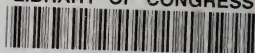
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